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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ROME 003597

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/24/2015

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SUBJECT: UN REFORM, IRAN: VISIT OF IO A/S SILVERBERG

REF: ROME 03538

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor David D. Pearce, reasons 1.
4 (b) and (d)

Summary

1. (C) Summary. Italian officials told visiting A/S Silverberg they would look at any UNSC reform proposal except national permanent seats, such as the G4 proposal. They agree on the importance of moving forward before the end of the year on UN Secretariat reform, the Peace Building Commission, and the Human Rights Council. MFA officials pledged to work to close the gap between the U.S. and EU on UNESCO's cultural diversity convention, which they saw as a difference in interpretation, not substance. A/S Silverberg delivered a clear message to both MFA and prime ministerial officials on the importance of unity and clarity on the U.S.-EU message to Iran. Italian officials stressed the political importance to them of such high-level consultations, especially on issues like Iraq, Iran, and UN reform, where Italy's interests are heavily engaged. Iraq portion of conversation reported reftel (notal). End summary.

2. (C) Assistant Secretary for International Organizations Kristen Silverberg met with senior officials from the Italian MFA and PM Berlusconi's office October 21 to discuss multilateral issues including UN reform, Iraq, Iran, Syria, the UN logistical base in Brindisi, and the UNESCO cultural convention. She was accompanied by Rome Political M/C, poloff, and IO senior adviser.

UN Reform

3. (C) "Not that we're obsessed" said a senior MFA official, but UN Security Council expansion continues to be a key issue for Italy. Director General for Political and Multilateral Affairs Giulio Terzi and PM Berlusconi's Deputy Diplomatic Advisor Francesco Talo both emphasized that they are happy with the current U.S. position on UNSC changes. They reiterated Italy's opposition to the G4 proposal, since it would give Germany a permanent UNSC seat and relegate Italy to a second-tier among European powers. A/S Silverberg said the United States only expressed specific support for an additional Japan seat, although our general thinking was in terms of a possible two or so permanent and three or so non-permanent seats. Terzi indicated that it might be possible to re-examine the definition of "permanent", but Italy was not interested in making P5 veto rights part of the debate. Talo said that Italy would be willing to look at any formula except national permanent seats.

4. (C) Terzi and Talo agreed with A/S Silverberg on the importance of moving forward before the end of the year on Secretariat reform, the Peace Building Commission, and the

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Human Rights Council. A/S Silverberg highlighted the need for progress on management reform before the December budget deadline and Terzi agreed to build consensus to move up the timetable to November. Italy supports a peer review process for the Human Rights Council, but Terzi commented that membership criteria might be hard to work out with important players like China that have human rights problems. The EU is discussing membership criteria that would allow a large majority of UN members to qualify while avoiding the "bad composition" of the current membership. Members could possibly be approved based on a 2/3 vote of UNGA members and a commitment, before UNGA, to abide by the highest standards of human rights protection. A/S Silverberg indicated the GA should also adopt minimal criteria--like excluding countries currently under UN sanctions for human rights abuses--to exclude truly bad actors.

5. (C) Italy's main concern in establishing a Peace Building Commission (PBC) is its position in the UN hierarchy, with Italy preferring a commission that recognizes ECOSOC's role, although Terzi recognized the UNSC role during the crisis phase of an operation. He felt the PBC should answer to ECOSOC in the latter, developmental stages of a crisis. thus avoiding some of the current misunderstandings and friction

between peacekeeping and humanitarian operations. A/S Silverberg pointed out the potential difficulties in having a Peace Building Commission with two masters.

Iran

16. (C) A/S Silverberg emphasized to Terzi, Sessa, and Talo the importance of maintaining a united front on Iran and not allowing Tehran to engage in its usual effort to play on perceived differences among the positions of the U.S. and various EU member states. Sessa, noting that he had served as ambassador in Iran, said the government situation in Tehran was very complex. The supreme leader had given new powers to Rafsanjani; this worked to undermine the power of the new president. Internal tensions could follow. It was important to use both sticks and carrots with Iran, but in the right way. A/S Silverberg replied that this was just the time when it was most important that Iran see unity and firm resolution by the U.S. and EU. It was essential that no individual countries offer Iran any "carrots" under the table.

17. (C) Sessa said Italian contacts with both Iran and Syria was at ambassador level. There is cohesion and this is essential, but to achieve what? The first concern in Iran is the stability of the regime. And Iran, unfortunately, can play a negative role in the stability of the region. Pol M/C put in that the Iranians do not respect weakness, they seek to exploit it. They do understand clarity. Sessa responded that only our country--the United States--can contribute to an Iranian policy change. The EU has only limited influence. Dialogue with the U.S. would be "very disruptive" for them, he said. "You are the only ones who can legitimate the regime, and this is their real target."

18. (C) Terzi and Sessa noted that Italy had concerns with the EU3 negotiating format (which it would never voice publicly), which they say is problematic within the EU context. Terzi explained that, holding the EU presidency at the time, Italy did not feel it was appropriate to join the EU3 when it initially formed. Now that the EU3 is more than a temporary format, Italy would like to be in close consultations with the group, as the United States and Russia are. Italy has been left out of the picture repeatedly, according to Terzi, which places them in a difficult position as Iran's main European trade partner. Terzi commented that Italy often had to ask the Russians for information on Iran talks because it heard nothing from the EU3.

Syria

19. (C) In response to that morning's release of the Mehli's report on Syrian involvement in the Hariri assassination, Sessa said it was important to renew the commission's UN mandate. Italy shares the U.S. view of Syria, according to Berlusconi's diplomatic advisor Marco Carnelos, but wants to avoid what it views as an even worse situation: regime collapse and Sunni extremists or the Muslim Brotherhood in charge in Damascus. Change is fine, but it should be well-calibrated.

UN Logistical Base in Brindisi

110. (C) Terzi reiterated Italy's concern with DPKO's plans to build a back-up communications center in Valencia, Spain, for functions now located in the UN Logistical and Communications Base in Brindisi. Italy feels any back-up capabilities that might be built in Valencia could be more efficiently incorporated into the existing Brindisi operation. Terzi also expressed concerns that Italy was not consulted in the decision-making process and only found out about the initiative from the press. A/S Silverberg assured Terzi that we value the Brindisi operation. We were not sure what DPKO had in mind, but would look into it.

UNESCO Cultural Diversity Convention

111. (C) A/S Silverberg raised U.S. concerns regarding potential misuse of the UNESCO Cultural Diversity Convention, especially in light of recent announcements by the French. Adolfo Barattolo, head of the Cultural Affairs Office, responded that Italy viewed the convention positively. The Italians share our view that the convention should not be misused in trade negotiations, but do not think this misuse is likely. Terzi recognized the importance of keeping the United States in UNESCO and promised to work within the EU on interpretation of the document. (On October 24, Terzi called DCM to report that Italy had been working hard on this issue, both in Rome and with Brussels, and he felt the result would

be clarification of the interpretation of Article 20, "in a way you like.")

Comment

112. (C) In each of A/S Silverberg's meetings, Italian officials stressed the value to them of consultations on issues where they are heavily involved, whether bilateral or multilateral. The MFA clearly took A/S Silverberg's message on UNESCO's cultural diversity convention to heart, and understood well the substance of U.S. concerns. The visit was also a timely opportunity to deliver USG views on the need for a clear and unified message on Iran to senior policymakers of one of Tehran's major trading partners. End comment.

113. (U) This message was cleared by A/S Silverberg.
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